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Whale function (slowest and most accurate). Seven minutes.

Dec 2, 2024, 10:40 PM
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(0:01) Hello, I'm Dr. Casey LaFrance. I'm a professor in the Department of Political Science at Western (0:07) Illinois University. I'm one of the co-authors on this paper looking at the applications of (0:14) generative AI for qualitative interview research from kind of the front end to the beginning and (0:21) I'll give you a little, or to the end, I'll give you a little bit of history of this assignment.

(0:25) So this is an assignment that started not because I was as intrigued by generative AI (0:34) as I am now. It started out of necessity during COVID when an assignment that I traditionally (0:43) had for students was to interview a policy actor. Now that could be anybody because we're all (0:48) involved in policy, but typically the idea is they would arrange an interview with someone (0:53) who was in a field that was related in some way to what they wanted to do in the future.

(0:58) And this worked out nicely because they could get connections made, they might get insider (1:02) information, they might get a reference or a letter of recommendation, a hint on an internship,(1:09) a job opportunity, who knows. So lots of value there and in going in the offices they're able (1:15) to see sort of the organizational culture. So what Edgar Schein would call the artifacts, (1:21) what's readily observable, but also the values.

So the way things are done and the, (1:27) or the stated values and then the assumptions, the way things are actually done. (1:31) So there's a lot that can happen in the context of sitting down with a person, but (1:36) COVID made that pretty unlikely. And at first I tried using other modalities and I still do.

(1:44) I allow students to conduct interviews using text-based mediums. So email, (1:52) they text or instant messaging. They can do Skype or Zoom interviews, telephone interviews, (2:01) that sort of thing.

But it was just becoming increasingly harder and harder to find somebody (2:06) at an office during lockdown and everybody was at home, right? So the pool of potential (2:13) interviewees was pretty slim and I still thought this was an important assignment because (2:19) it's the assignment that I see as checking what I teach in the classroom versus what someone in (2:25)

the real world would say to see if I'm answering what we call in public administration policy, (2:30) the so what question. And I said, well, what, what the heck? I've had students ask repeatedly (2:39) or bemoan the fact that they can't talk to these people whose work they're reading. (2:43) And say, how would this apply in contemporary times? What would the founders, for instance, (2:48) think about nuclear weapons policy or the internet or artificial intelligence, right? (2:54) And it dawned on me that generative AI is a mechanism by which we can make this happen, (3:01) or at least approximate it.

And we have to be careful. We're not talking directly to the (3:06) person, of course, but we are looking at a mirror of a pretty deep, wide ranging analysis (3:14) of a lot of available literature about this person, about this person's writings, and a lot (3:22) of the knowledge this person didn't have about contemporary issues and how their ideas might (3:28) be applied to them. So it's a way to, to keep things fresh, right? We're reading people from (3:34) the 1700s, the 1600s, and we read Machiavelli, we're reading from the 1500s.

So bringing somebody (3:40) back from five, 800 years ago and sitting down and saying, hey, how would your ideas apply now? (3:47) It's just a really cool thing to, to play around with. And the students really drove it. They(3:54) came up with some novel ways to present questions. They came up with some application areas that I (4:01) never would have thought of. And they really seemed to enjoy the assignment and benefit from it, (4:06) despite the fact that it didn't have the same benefits as the original assignment. (4:11) So I started working with my graduate students, Uru and Yinka, as well as my colleagues, (4:18) John and Leron.

And we were looking at the issue of using this technology in three, (4:27) well, four ways. Helping with developing the interview schedule, right? Giving feedback along(4:34) the way. And the thing about AI is it can take on the persona of someone like Irene Rubin, (4:40) a well-known, very well-accomplished researcher in the field of qualitative interviewing. (4:47) She wrote the book that is considered by many to be the authoritative text on qualitative (4:51) interviewing with her husband, Herb. And it's called Qualitative Interviewing the Art of Hearing (4:57) Data. Wonderful book.

And bringing Irene Rubin in to say, hey, how could I improve my questions? (5:05) I'm getting at least some benefits of actually having her there. Though it could never replace (5:13) Irene. It could never replace the way that her brain works.

It can definitely mirror what thoughts (5:20) she has put out there and how those can be applied. There are also a couple of considerations (5:25) that come along with developing the questions. We have to decide what purpose are we trying to (5:31) achieve? What's our overall theme? And AI is not going to do that for us.

We have to have some (5:35) scaffolding in place. And the more context we offer, generally speaking, the literature suggests(5:42) that we're going to get richer responses anyway, right? So it helps with that end. It helps with (5:48) generating the question schedule, improving it, helping with probes, follow-ups, that sort of (5:53) thing.

It can also help with the transcription phase. That's something that is near and dear (6:01) to my heart. My dissertation research was based on 30 interviews I conducted with police chiefs (6:07) and county sheriffs.

And generally speaking, for about every hour of tape, it took me three hours (6:13) to transcribe using this really antiquated foot pedal machine that had a cassette tape that(6:22) most of my

students wouldn't recognize. It was like a smaller version of an 8-track. But (6:28) gosh, it was a bear.
And if you missed a line, you had to hit rewind. And it was a mess. (6:35) Otter AI does that instantly.
So three hours of labor is saved. And we could use that time (6:43) to conduct more interviews, to conduct more intercoder reliability schemes, to write, to sleep, (6:50) to do any number of things. We do want to be cautious in interpreting coding, which is the (6:58) next thing that AI can do for us.
It can help us to establish some initial coding schemes. (7:03) We want to be cautious there to develop intercoder reliability, especially with a human. (7:08) The way that that could best be achieved is to have a human code random segments, (7:15) or check the code of random segments to make sure that (7:20) that there is some quality control and some oversight.
(7:25) Data privacy is another huge issue related to AI. And we have to be cautious what we feed (7:34) into these large learning models, large language models. So (7:39) data privacy and regulation is not something that's standardized across the world.
(7:43) We see two emergent mechanisms, two regulatory schemes that are very different. In Europe, (7:49) we have the Global Data Privacy Act that essentially guarantees everybody in Europe (7:56) the opportunity to consent before having their data collected. In the United States, (8:02) we have sort of a patchwork of different regulatory agencies built on the social (8:07) regulation model.
And what that means is we have regulatory agencies who are regulating (8:14) one facet of every industry, but typically not communicating with one another. So there(8:19) might be some opportunities there for redundancy, duplication, waste, that sort of thing. (8:24) Those ought to be addressed.
And then the final point with generative AI is because it is a mirror (8:30) of society and society, at least in contemporary times, is built on Western traditions and (8:38) Western ideas at the exclusion of other perspectives, at the exclusion of the ideas of(8:46) women or historically oppressed groups. Duncan Kennedy, a legal scholar at Harvard University, (8:52) called this the reproduction of hierarchy. And in essence, what it means is when I teach (8:57) my students, what I'm teaching them is based on what I learned from my professors, (9:04) who learned from their professors, who learned from their professors all the way back to (9:08) Socrates or Aristotle.
And again, this follows a Western canon trajectory, and it prioritizes (9:16) the Western canon as the source of knowledge in the world. AI reflects that. And as a result,(9:22) AI can provide biased responses, especially responses that are biased toward perspectives (9:30) of the global North, right? And that would mean Europe, and that would mean North America (9:34) primarily. So we have to account for that with rigorous training, with rigorous oversight, (9:41) and with more and more exposure of the model to new data, diverse data. And we can do that (9:49) through oversampling different demographic groups, the work that's produced by members (9:56) of historically oppressed groups, so on and so forth. There's a lot that can be done, (10:01) but it needs to be on the forefront.
With those caveats in place, though, I think this is a (10:06) wonderful mechanism. It's a wonderful opportunity to inject some life into reading crusty old (10:13) documents that maybe aren't as immediately salient. So that's kind of the angle we're (10:23) coming from.

We are excited to offer this and learn and revise and adapt and see what else (10:32) we can offer here. So thanks for taking the time to look at our project. Have a wonderful day.